

Sugary Sweet As Syrup by Val_Creative

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Summary:

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Sugary Sweet As Syrup

Author's Note:

SO MANY SECRET SANTA THINGS ARE GOING ON! I'm not sure the person I was assigned will ever see this or read it, but I hope anyone who loves Mileven really enjoys this cuteness and I'd be glad to hear your thoughts/comments on this! Thanks! :) I love them both so much... oh my gosh...

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Mike doesn't know if *bad* is a good enough word for how today has gone.

He's been grounded for the three-day weekend, after getting caught stealing quarters from Nancy's piggy-bank again... while his friends enjoyed the chilly, sunshine-filled autumn day. Along with the local, town-wide carnival brimming with games and prizes, and rides like bumper cars, Tilt a Whirl, and the Ferris Wheel.

It isn't everybody else's fault he's stuck at home, but Mike can't help but feel a little bitter about the fact they're all having fun without him. Did they even think about him being under *house arrest* like this?

Probably not.

He mopes upstairs, flopped on his belly and staring dully ahead at the wallpaper. Mike's supercom crackles with loud, blaring static. A voice echoes through the noise, tiny and unintelligible.

Mike scowls and grabs the device from his table-stand, pressing a button. "Go away, over," he snaps.

"No," comes the same, familiar voice, heightening though the static.

He frowns.

"... El?" Mike asks doubtfully, pressing it closer to his ear.

"Mike. Please talk to me."

His heart does a funny, little twist inside his ribcage, when she says his name so softly and carefully like that.

Mike's teeth sink into his lower lip. It's not her fault — but he doesn't want to deal with anyone's sympathy right now.

"I'm not in the mood, sorry," he says lowly. "Over and out."

He shoves his palm against the antenna, dragging it to click shut. Mike switches off the transmission and jumps off his bed, only to hear the static return through his speakers, louder than before.

Mike storms back to the other end of his bed, picking his supercom.

"Knock it off!" he shouts.

"No."

It's stubborn and forceful how she says it. Mike gives up, sighing, resting on the edge of his mattress. "How's the carnival? You guys having a *tubular* time?" he speaks up, not bothering to mask his blunt sarcasm.

"I'm not there," El tells him matter-of-factly. "I'm outside your house."

She's *what*...?

Mike's eyes widen. He gets onto his feet, dropping his supercom and rushing for the staircase. On the last steps, Mike collides rudely into Ted Wheeler who just grunts in his direction, passing his son for the dining room. Mike's fingers slip awkwardly around the doorknob, rattling it, before he throws open the front door.

El's brown curls turn amber-golden in the sunlight, haloing around her face. Her lips slowly smile. "Hi," she murmurs. For a long, heavenly moment, Mike forgets why he was even angry in the first place.

"Hi," Mike repeats, smiling back.

She's bundled up cozy in a dark red parka and mittens, and El presents to him what's hidden behind her back — a whole box of Eggos. It's an opened box, with the clear, plastic wrapper poking out and missing a couple of Eggos when Mike inspects it later, but a whole box nonetheless.

"For... to feel better..."

El's nails pick at a stray, dark thread, as she slips off her mittens and waits for Mike to say something. He chuckles, shaking his head.

"Thanks, El," Mike whispers, stepping in and accepting a short, sweet kiss.

The heat tingles the surface of his mouth, and for a brief second, he feels El's eyelashes quivering on his cheek and his name soundlessly parting her lips. Mike kisses her again, holding her cheek tenderly with one hand, feeling her arms drift to his neck. How does she *do* this to him... make everything so much better...

"Michael, honey, it's time for—*oh goodness*." Karen Wheeler's trilling, nervous laugh echoes the foyer. Mike turns around quickly, looking up as his mother stares in polite bemusement. "Who might this be?"

"She's—*uhh*—"

"Jane," El interrupts without missing a beat, and Mike's relief screams out *thank you* mentally. She holds out her hand immediately to Karen. "My name is Jane Hopper. It's nice to meet you, Mrs. Wheeler."

The woman's face brightens with realization.

"I thought I heard something about Hopper adopted a little girl recently. It's very nice to meet you, Jane," Karen greets her, reaching out to squeeze onto her hand. "Would you like to come in for some breakfast?"

Mike tosses the Eggos into the toaster to be browned, glancing over his shoulder.

The dining room's table is covered with plates and napkins, with a tray of bacon and yellowed, scrambled eggs and plain muffins. El sits next to Mike's empty chair, saying nothing and tapping her ankles to the legs.

He hurries back, leaving a warmed, toasted Eggo on her plate. Mike snatches up the maple syrup, pouring a huge, gooey amount onto his scrambled eggs.

At El's dubious look, he gestures with the bottle. "Try it!" Mike insists. "It's good, I promise."

She still looks uncertain, but does the same thing as Mike, pouring it directly onto her eggs. El takes a bite, making a surprised, pleased noise, gazing at Mike.

"Told you," he says, grinning.

Nancy sticks out her tongue a little, muttering, "That is *still* disgusting."

At this, Mike's upper lip curls.

"So is having to watch you suck face with Steve Harrington *and* Jonathan Byers after school," he retorts.

"Suck face?" Ted asks across the dining room table, perplexed.

"*And?*" Karen points out, astonished. "What on earth is he talking about, Nancy?"

"Oh my god, you little asshole—" Nancy hisses out, throwing her napkin into Mike's smug expression.

"—*Language!*"

"Thanks for breakfast, Mommy!" Nancy then fake-chirps out, blushing and flying out of her chair. "Gotta run!" As she disappears into the foyer, Karen calls for her daughter, leaning over the table but nobody

stands.

Ted continues to stare down at his plate, cutting up his bacon.

"... Is it considered normal to have *two* boyfriends these days?" he questions.

Mike snorts over his glass of orange juice.

"If you're Nancy apparently."

"And what about you, Mike?" Ted stares up through his thick-rimmed eyeglasses, motioning idly with his greasy butter-knife between him and El. "Is this your new girlfriend or something?"

Mike blushes too, gobsmacked.

"Dad."

Karen nods, letting Holly chew on a fistful of scrambled eggs herself from her high-chair. "That's what I'd like to know as well, Michael," she says firmly. Mike makes a helpless groan, rubbing his face.

Oh god, he's surrounded.

"She's... El's a friend!"

Ted's eyebrows furrow together. "Who is El?"

"I was living in the basement," El admits quietly, gathering her hands bashfully into her lap. Mike resists smacking his face into his sticky, golden pile of eggs. He's gonna be grounded until he's thirty.

"*You're* the little Russian girl?" Karen's mouth hangs open. "The one they were all looking for in our house?"

Mike grits his teeth visibly, his anger flaring up. "She's *NOT* Russian—she's from Indiana and they kidnapped her when she was a baby!" he yells. Holly whimpers, ducking into her seat.

Karen shushes her, looking at El. "Oh honey, I'm so sorry. Where are your parents?"

"Gone," she says solemnly.

"You wanna know how they *tortured* her in Hawkins Lab too, Mom?"

Ted glares in his son's direction. "Hey, watch it with your tone, young man," he announces, ignoring Mike's silent, huffing eyeroll. "If I'm not mistaken, you're still grounded until Monday morning."

El's mouth flattens into a thoughtful line.

"Mike found me when the bad men were after me," she tells everyone, her dark brown eyes on Karen. "I'm sorry they came here and I'm sorry if you were scared."

Karen tuts worriedly, reaching for El's hand now on the table, covering her fingers.

"Oh no, Jane—we're sorry that all of this happened to you in the first place. We're very glad that you have a safe home now. Do you like having Hopper as your dad?"

Mike sends her an outright '*what the actual hell?*' look, tilting his head backwards.

"He's nice," El whispers, not pulling away from Karen's hand. It's difficult to miss the hint of gratefulness in her voice. "He's good to me when he doesn't have to be."

Ted makes a disbelieving sound.

"Doesn't sound like Hopper to me..."

Before anyone says or does anything, Mike watches as El's neck bends slightly to the right. Ted's fork and his plate flip over without explanation, dumping onto the carpet. He grimaces.

"I almost forgot!" Mike cries out, jerkily grabbing El's free hand. "She's supposed to go to a... a *dentist appointment*! Yeah, we gotta go! Sorry!" He races out of the dining room and the opened, sunshine-filled front door, with a deeply confused El in tow, escaping his parents hollering his name.

Thankfully for him, Mike's bike is unchained.

He hops on, feeling El climb right behind him, before riding towards the nearest street-corner. He's gonna be in so much trouble, but it's okay when El clings tightly to him, breathing out a giggle in his ear.

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